

The AMBER Plan

A recently enacted component of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) has been credited with aiding in the rescue of several missing children who were kidnapped by strangers. It's called the AMBER Plan.

Background

The AMBER Plan is named for a 9-year-old girl who was kidnapped by a stranger and later found dead in 1996. In response to that tragedy, the radio stations in that area agreed to repeat news bulletins about abducted children, hoping the bulletins might help save the life of a child.

The name now stands for America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response.

It Works Like This

Once police officials have confirmed a missing child report, an alert is sent to radio stations, television stations, and cable companies. Broadcasters interrupt programming to relay the information using the EAS to voluntarily deliver the information to the community – the same concept used during severe weather or national emergencies. A description of the abducted child, suspected abductor and details of the abduction are broadcast to millions of listeners and viewers. (The alert is read after a distinctive sound tone and the statement: "This is an AMBER Alert.") The alert also provides information about how members of the public who have information relating to the abduction may contact the police or other appropriate law enforcement agency.

The goal of the AMBER Plan is to galvanize an entire community, adding millions of extra eyes and ears to watch, listen, and help in the safe return of the child and apprehension of the suspect.

The EAS is used to notify the public about severe weather and other national emergencies. In order to prevent the over use of the EAS system, two criteria must usually be met to enact the AMBER Plan:

- A child must be 15 years of age or younger, or with a proven mental or physical disability; and
- Police must believe the child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death.



What You Can Do

If you see a child, adult, or vehicle fitting the AMBER Alert description, immediately call the telephone number given in the AMBER Alert and provide authorities with as much information as possible.

Remember

The AMBER Alerts are only used for the most serious child abduction cases, where the police believe the child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death, not for runaways or most parental abductions.

For additional information on the AMBER Plan, visit the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's (NCMEC) Web site, www.missingkids.com.

###

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on www.fcc.gov/cgb/emailservice.html.

020809

